

Lonergan's Method in Theology as the Theoretical Framework of Ecumenical Methodology of Differentiated Consensus

Gabriel So

摘要：梵二之後，天主教會致力促進基督徒的合一，並逐漸發展出一個「求同存異」的交談方法，試圖與分離的教會團體在分歧的教義上達成「一中有多」的共識。然而這個交談方法以不同教會團體「分歧信念的共識」為預設，既缺乏神學理論基礎使各教會認同，亦未有實際考慮如何讓交談成果更新教會生活。本文遂嘗試以郎尼根的神學方法建立基督徒合一「求同存異」交談方法的理論架構，以教會團體的「共同信德的分享」為預設，根據「歸化」、「辯證」與「奠基」的神學方法論，使神學家對共同信德能達致共同視野，讓教會團體對此信德分歧的詮釋有明智的理解，對相反的歷史立場有合理的判斷，好能作出負責的抉擇，讓合一交談達成的共識在教會各自的信仰生活中落實。

Introduction

The search for Christian unity is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council,¹ as reflected from the long-lasting process of ecumenical encounters with churches of different confessions through the World Council of Churches' Commission on Faith and Order as well as a lot of ecumenical dialogues from 1966 up to now.² While modern theology is highly methodologically aware, however, the same cannot be said of ecumenical theology practised in these dialogues.³

Nevertheless, since these ecumenical dialogues were assumed to seek a theological consensus that made Christian unity possible, an ecumenical methodology which saw "the consensus of divisive belief" as the presupposition of the unity of the Church began to emerge. This unnamed methodology affirmed "unity" and "diversity" as the twofold aim of the dialogues so that the dialogue partners could promote a view of the Church as a *koinonia*, a fellowship of churches of different confessions living and showing forth Christian unity.

In recent years, this gradually developing and recognized methodology has been termed "differentiated consensus."⁴ As such a

1 *Unitatis redintegratio* 1.

2 Eleuterio F. Fortino, "The Action of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity from the Promulgation of *Unitatis redintegratio* Until Today," in *Searching for Christian Unity* (New York: New City Press, 2007), p. 131.

3 Paul Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology: The Church Made Whole?* (London: T & T Clark International, 2010), p. 40.

4 William G. Rusch, *Ecumenical Reception: Its Challenge and Opportunity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), p. 119-120.

methodology allows for both unity in the basic truth and articulation of this truth through diverse confessional formulations, it is pictured in terms of two levels: the first fundamental level of "consensus" and a second level of remaining "differences" which are tolerable in regard to the consensus. Accordingly, differentiated consensus always includes two sets of statements: one set articulates the fundamental agreement identified on a doctrine in dispute; the second set discloses in what ways and for what reasons these remaining differences can be considered as admissible and not calling into question the agreement.⁵

The most impressive example of differentiated consensus being employed as an ecumenical methodology is the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* of 1999 between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation. In paragraph 15, the *Declaration* articulates a fundamental agreement on the doctrine of justification: "By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works."⁶ Then in paragraph 40, the Roman Catholic Church and the churches of the Lutheran World Federation affirm together that "a consensus in the basic truth of the doctrine of justification exists between Roman Lutherans and Catholics."⁷ This makes possible two

⁵ William G. Rusch, *Ecumenical Reception: Its Challenge and Opportunity*, pp. 120-121.

⁶ Lutheran World Federation; Roman Catholic Church, *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* 15 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2000).

⁷ *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* 40.

statements in paragraph 41: "The teachings of the Lutheran churches presented in the Declaration do not fall under the condemnations of the Council of Trent. The condemnations in the Lutheran Confessions do not apply to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church presented in this Declaration,"⁸ implying the remaining differences of the respective teachings on the doctrine of justification as admissible.

Though this differentiated consensus has become the present-day golden rule of ecumenical methodology, it obviously lacks a sound theological basis for ecclesial recognition as well as the practical consideration of ecumenical reception, and is inevitably open to criticism.

First of all, Mayer critiques that it places heavy burdens on those who employ it by its use of technical terminology and controversial theology. The inner dynamic toward greater unity which would bear a more effective witness to the one God is thus lost by this so-called ecumenical methodology, leading to the perpetuation of a multi-denominational reality.⁹ Besides, ecumenical reception has not been taken into consideration to renew the life of the churches with the fruit of the ecumenical dialogues. Moreover, many consensus statements have been articulated in such a way that their relation to the broader scope of theological operations remains unclear. This has left the churches

⁸ *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* 41.

⁹ Annemarie C. Mayer, "Language Serving Unity? Linguistic-Hermeneutical Considerations of a Basic Ecumenical Problem," *Pro Ecclesia* 15, no. 2 (2006): 205-222.

unsure of how the differentiated consensus is related to the positions that have historically been judged to be contrary, and also how they relate to the Christian life today. Finally, even though differentiated consensus has emerged as a recognized ecumenical methodology, most of the ecumenical dialogues, at least as their reports reveal, still seem to be generally deficient in methodological consciousness,¹⁰ reflecting the need of improving this ecumenical methodology for its widespread adoption.

Admittedly, ecumenical methodology is a new subdivision of general theological methodology, so to articulate a coherent and comprehensive theological methodology for ecumenical dialogues is not an easy task. It demands that the theologian be clear about not only the epistemological, but also the metaphysical foundation of that method. Few have the ability to develop first an epistemology and then a methodology that builds on and follows from it, as Lonergan did. Should this be the case, is Lonergan's method in theology applied from his epistemology in *Insight* adaptable to improve the ecumenical methodology of differentiated consensus?

As evident from *Method in Theology*, "ecumenism" is originally one of Lonergan's theological concerns.¹¹ In the concluding remarks of the last chapter, he writes,

¹⁰ Paul Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology: The Church Made Whole?* (London: T&P Clark International, 2010), p. 40.

¹¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), pp. 119, 123, 130, 136, 144, 360, 367.

In fact, the church is divided. There exist different confessions of faith. There are defended different notions of the church. Different groups cooperate in different ways. Despite such differences there exist both a real and an ideal unity. The real unity is the response to the one Lord in the one Spirit. The ideal unity is the fruit of Christ's prayer: ".....may they all be one....." (John 17: 21). At the present time that fruit is ecumenism. In so far as ecumenism is a dialogue between theologians, our chapters on Dialectics and on Doctrines indicate the methodical notions that have occurred to us. But ecumenism also is a dialogue between churches and then largely it operates within the framework of the World Council of Churches and under the directives of particular churches. Illustrative of such directives is the decree on ecumenism issued by the second Vatican council.¹²

Besides, Lonergan explicitly articulates his ecumenical purpose of writing the chapter on Doctrines so that theologians from different church confessions might adapt his method to discover their doctrines in common, making it a matter of consensus:

Church officials have the duty to protect the religion on which theologians reflect, but it is up to the theologians themselves to carry the burden of making theological doctrine as much a matter of consensus as any other long-standing academic discipline. There is a further aspect to the matter. Though a Roman Catholic with quite conservative views on religious

¹² Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 367.

and church doctrines, I have written a chapter on doctrines without subscribing to any but the doctrine about doctrine set forth in the first Vatican Council. I have done so deliberately, and my purpose has been ecumenical. I desire it to be as simple as possible for theologians of different allegiance to adapt my method to their uses. Even though theologians start from different church confessions, even though their methods are analogous rather than similar, still that analogy will help all to discover how much they have in common and it will tend to bring to light how greater agreement might be achieved.¹³

Therefore, in view of the deficiencies of “differentiated consensus” as a prevalent ecumenical methodology, I propose making an improvement of this methodology with regard to its presupposition, theological basis for ecclesial recognition and the practical consideration of ecumenical reception, with a theoretical framework adapted from Lonergan’s methodical notions elaborated in *Method in Theology*.

I) Lonergan’s Methodical Notions in *Method in Theology*

a) Lonergan’s Terminological Distinction of “Faith” and “Belief”

As aforesaid, “differentiated consensus” is an ecumenical methodology which sees “the consensus of divisive belief” as the

¹³ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 332-333.

presupposition of the unity of the Church. With an intention to facilitate ecumenical dialogue, Lonergan puts forward the terminological distinction of the older manner of speech concerning “faith” and “belief”:

We have distinguished between faith and religious beliefs. We have done so as a consequence of our view that there is a realm in which love precedes knowledge. Also we have done so because this matter of speech facilitates ecumenical discourse. But while we consider our grounds to be valid and our purposes legitimate, we must acknowledge the existence of an older and more authoritative tradition in which faith and religious belief are identified. We make this acknowledgment all the more readily because we are departing, not from the older doctrine, but only from the older manner of speech.¹⁴

Theoretically speaking, what Lonergan advocates behind the terminological distinction of “faith” and “belief” is making the shift from a “classicist mentality” to “historical mindedness,” the two worldviews which he understands as two different apprehensions of humankind.¹⁵ In his view, classicist mentality apprehends culture and human nature normatively as one; whereas historical mindedness apprehends them normatively as many, on the basis of which terminological distinction can be made:

¹⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 123.

¹⁵ Bernard Lonergan, “The Transition from a Classical World-View to Historical-Mindedness,” in *A Second Collection*, eds. William F. J. Ryan & Bernard J. Tyrrell (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1974), pp. 1-9.

We are not departing from the older doctrine, for in acknowledging religious beliefs we are acknowledging what also was termed faith, and in acknowledging a faith that grounds belief we are acknowledging what would have been termed the *lumen gratiae* or *lumen fidei* or infused wisdom. Finally, while a classicist would maintain that one should never depart from an accepted terminology, I must contend that classicism is no more than the mistaken view of conceiving culture normatively and of concluding that there is just one human nature. The modern fact is that culture has to be conceived empirically, that there are many cultures, and that new distinctions are legitimate when the reasons for them are explained.¹⁶

Practically speaking, this shift from classicist mentality to historical-mindedness is of paramount importance to the ecumenical dialogues because it has assisted the churches of different confessions to recognize each other's traditions as alternative and developing articulations of the one Gospel, each capturing the core of the Gospel in diverse confessional formulations with respective strengths and weaknesses. The recognition of historicity also allows the churches of different confessions to grow from charges of heresy to desires of unity.¹⁷ It is with this insight that Lonergan distinguishes faith and belief to secure a theological basis for ecumenical encounter:

We may note, however, that by distinguishing faith and belief we have secured a basis both for ecumenical encounter and for an encounter between all religions with a basis in religious experience. For in the measure that experience is genuine, it is orientated to the mystery of love and awe; it has the power of unrestricted love to reveal and uphold all that is truly good; it remains the bond that unites the religious community, that directs their common judgments, that purifies their beliefs. Beliefs do differ, but behind this difference there is a deeper unity. For beliefs result from judgments of value, and the judgments of value relevant for religious belief come from faith, the eye of religious love, an eye that can discern God's self-disclosures.¹⁸

Obviously, the Roman Catholic Church has shared this new worldview and already made the shift from classicist mentality to historical mindedness, as reflected from the different emphases of the two Vatican Councils.¹⁹ This is thoroughly confirmed in the 1973 teaching of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Mysterium ecclesiae*, when it notes that "the meaning of the pronouncements of faith depends partly upon the expressive power of the language used at a certain point in time and in particular circumstances;" that "some dogmatic truth is first expressed incompletely, and at a later date.....it receives a fuller and more perfect expression."²⁰

¹⁶ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 123-124.

¹⁷ Margaret O'Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1998), p. 119.

¹⁸ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 119.

¹⁹ Margaret O'Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1998), p. 118.

²⁰ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Mysterium ecclesiae* in *The Tablet* 227, 14 July 1973, p. 668.

Since the worldview of historical mindedness has been accepted by Roman Catholic Church, and the term of "faith" that grounds different beliefs will constitute a more primordial premise for ecumenical encounter than "belief," we can reasonably take "the sharing of common faith" as the presupposition of the ecumenical methodology of differentiated consensus rather than "the consensus of divisive belief".

b) Lonergan's Distinction of Functional Specialities in Theology

As we all know, Lonergan's method in theology is rooted on both the epistemological basis of his cognitional theory and the spiritual basis of "conversion." Therefore, before we explore how his methodical notions of "conversion" elaborated in *Method in Theology* can play a fundamental role in ecumenical endeavours and ground the ecumenical methodology of differentiated consensus, we should first understand the relationship between his method in theology and cognitional theory.

In *Method in Theology*, Lonergan describes his method as a "normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results."²¹ Since this method is an application of his cognitional theory developed in *Insight*, Lonergan conceives contemporary theology as a series of functionally interdependent sets on the basis of the dynamic structure of conscious intentionality. These intrinsically inter-related stages of theology can

²¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 4.

be divided into eight distinct functional specialities, which separate these successive stages from data to results according to two principles.

The first principle of the division is that theological operations occur in two basic phases....If one encounters the past, one also has to take one's stand toward the future. In brief, there is a theology in *oratione obliqua* that tells what Paul and John, Augustine and Aquinas, and anyone else had to say about God and the economy of salvation. But there is also a theology in *oratione recta* in which the theologian, enlightened by the past, confronts the problems of his own day. The second principle of division is derived from the fact that our conscious and intentional operations occur on four distinct levels and that each level has its own proper achievement and end. So the proper achievement and end of the first level, experiencing, is the apprehension of data; that of the second level, understanding, is insight into the apprehended data; that of the third level, judgment, is the acceptance or rejection of the hypotheses and theories put forward by understanding to account for the data; that of the fourth level, decision, the acknowledgment of values and the selection of the methods or other means that lead to their realization.²²

In brief, the eight functional specializations arise inasmuch as one operates on the four levels of conscious and intentional operations: experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding to achieve the end

²² Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 133.

proper to some particular level. Since there are four levels, there are four proper ends; and since in theology there are two distinct phases, there are eight functional specializations in theology:

In the first phase of theology in *oratione obliqua* there are research, interpretation, history, and dialectic. In the second phase of theology in *oratione recta* there are foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications.²³

These two phases in which the eight theological operations occur are distinct in the way that the first one is the mediating phase which encounters the past, assimilates the tradition, and introduces us to knowledge of the Body of Christ²⁴ :

So in assimilating the past, first, there is research that uncovers and makes available the data, secondly, there is interpretation that understands their meaning, thirdly, there is history that judges and narrates what occurred and, fourthly, there is dialectic that endeavors to unravel the conflicts concerning values, facts, meanings, and experiences. The first four functional specialities, then, seek the ends proper respectively to experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding; and, of course, each one does so by employing not some one but all four of the levels of conscious and intentional operations.²⁵

²³ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 134.

²⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 135.

²⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 134.

The second phase is the mediated phase: it confronts the future, hands on the tradition, proclaims the knowledge of God known mediately through the whole Christ, Head and members, with the specialties named in inverse order²⁶:

Like dialectic, foundations is on the level of decision. Like history, doctrines is on the level of judgment. Like interpretation, systematics aims at understanding. Finally, as research tabulates the data from the past, so communications produces data in the present and for the future.²⁷

c) Lonergan's Methodical Notion of "Conversion"

Having a grasp of the epistemological basis of Lonergan's method in theology, we can come to its spiritual basis of "conversion." Early in the 1960s, Vatican II has already embraced a view of ecumenical engagement rooted in personal conversion. As Vatican II's *Decree on Ecumenism* taught, ecumenism means a change of heart toward other Christians, a conversion in attitude toward their traditions. Vatican II believed that a new understanding of other Christians, a change of mind, must be accompanied by this change of heart. Hence it recommended common prayer and dialogue to grow toward this new understanding.²⁸

²⁶ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 135.

²⁷ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 135.

²⁸ *Unitatis redintegratio* 8.

In 1993, the *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* also shares this vision of Vatican II: "In the ecumenical movement it is necessary to give priority to conversion of heart, spiritual life and its renewal. This change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and can rightly be called 'spiritual ecumenism.'" ²⁹

In 1995, the encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* of Pope John Paul II further delineated four dimensions of dialogue in the Christian community as ecumenically paramount: dialogue of charity, dialogue of conversion, dialogue of truth, and dialogue of salvation. The dialogue of truth and dialogue of salvation cannot be sustained in ecumenical encounter without commitment to the dialogue of charity and dialogue of conversion. Among them, the dialogue of conversion is said to be a Spirit-led encounter in Christ and with Christ that changes the heart. ³⁰

As we can see from these three important ecumenical documents, all ecumenical dialogues are fundamentally a dialogue of conversion in the life of the churches. Since the concept of "conversion" advocated in these ecumenical documents all lays emphasis on the "personal" dimension, it is more applicable to "spiritual ecumenism" than "doctrinal ecumenism." Conversion of heart is thus advocated as a

supplementary aid to the ecumenical methodology of differentiated consensus between churches.

However, Lonergan gives us some profound insights into this concept of "conversion." In his method, Lonergan understands "conversion" as "a transformation of the subject and his world," ³¹ affecting all our conscious and intentional operations: "It directs his gaze, pervades his imagination, releases the symbols that penetrate to the depths of his psyche. It enriches his understanding, guides his judgments, reinforces his decisions." ³²

At first glance, Lonergan's concept of "conversion" seems to stress the change of "mind" rather than the change of "heart." Actually, he lays equal, if not greater, emphasis on the change of "heart" as the change of "mind" to eliminate superfluous opposition of theologians in the functional specialties of research, interpretation and history by distinguishing three levels of conversion:

After all, Christian theologians disagree not only on the areas relevant to theological research but also on the interpretation of texts, on the occurrence of events, on the significance of movements. Such differences can have quite different grounds. Some may be eliminated by further progress in research, interpretation, history, and they can be left to the

²⁹ *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, 63 (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1993).

³⁰ *Ut Unum Sint* 35.

³¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 130.

³² Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 131.

healing office of time. Some may result from developmental pluralism: there exist disparate cultures and diverse differentiations of consciousness; and such differences are to be bridged by working out the suitable transposition from one culture to another or from one differentiation of consciousness to another. Others, finally, arise because intellectual or moral or religious conversion has not occurred.³³

According to Lonergan, the "others" which he has not mentioned refer to the fundamental conflicts stemming from an explicit or implicit cognitional theory, an ethical stance, a religious outlook. They profoundly modify one's mentality and can be overcome only through an intellectual, moral, religious conversion.³⁴ While each of the three conversions is connected with the other two, each is a different type of event and has to be considered in itself before being related to the others.

Intellectual conversion is a radical clarification and the elimination of a misleading myth that knowing is like looking and that objectivity is seeing what is there to be seen. This myth overlooks the distinction between the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning. The reality known is not just looked at, but is given in experience, organized by understanding, posited by judgment and belief.³⁵ In

other words, intellectual conversion is a process of cognitional self-transcendence in which one understands, judges and believes the reality that one experiences as true. This puts one into a world with a new horizon, which is essential for ecumenical dialogues.

Moral conversion goes beyond the truth to values generally, opting for the truly good and value against satisfaction when value and satisfaction conflict. It promotes the subject from cognitional to moral self-transcendence, taking a step further into decision to uncover and root out one's individual, group, and general bias; as well as to keep scrutinizing one's intentional responses to values and their implicit scales of preference, listening to criticism and learning from others.³⁶ In other words, moral conversion is a process of moral self-transcendence in which one apprehends, affirms, and realizes the human values.

Religious conversion goes beyond moral and transforms the existential subject into a subject held, grasped, possessed, owned through an other worldly love. It is total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, qualifications, and reservations. For Christians this is God's love flooding our hearts through the gift of the Holy Spirit.³⁷ This experience of being in love with God strengthens the Christians to move forward toward the reconciliation of the churches.

³³ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 150-151.

³⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 235.

³⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 238.

³⁶ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 240-242.

³⁷ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 240-242.

As we can see, this all-rounded concept of “conversion” in Lonergan’s method is applicable to both doctrinal and spiritual ecumenism between theologians as well as between churches. Theologians and Christians in churches of different confessions but sharing a common faith in Jesus can be attentive to His Gospel, intelligent in the inquiry for understanding the Gospel, reasonable in judging the truth of the Gospel, responsible in deciding the response to the Gospel; so that we will be spiritually grasped by God’s love, the conjoining of which with its manifestation in Jesus and his followers forms the basis of Christian ecumenism.³⁸ In this way, Lonergan’s methodical notion of “conversion” constitutes a strong theological basis for the ecumenical methodology of differentiated consensus.

d) Lonergan’s Methodical Notion of “Dialectic”

Lonergan writes, “in so far as ecumenism is a dialogue between theologians, our chapters on Dialectic and on Doctrines indicate the methodical notions that have occurred to us.”³⁹ Therefore, after exploring how “conversion” can play a fundamental role in ecumenical endeavours and ground the ecumenical methodology of differentiated consensus, we come to the functional speciality of “dialectic.”

In Lonergan’s method in theology, dialectic is “an ecumenical variant on the long-standing controversial and apologetic types of

theology.”⁴⁰ Accordingly, he describes dialectic as “a generalized apologetic conducted in an ecumenical spirit, aiming ultimately at a comprehensive viewpoint, and proceeding toward the goal by acknowledging differences, seeking their grounds real and apparent, and eliminating superfluous opposition.”⁴¹ In this way, those differences of horizon that are complementary will be distinguished from those that are dialectically opposed which “lead to opposed value judgments, opposed accounts of historical movements, opposed interpretations of authors, and different selections of data in special research.”⁴² Since the ecumenical methodology of differentiated consensus aims at reaching consensus with admissible difference, we should pay greater attention to the operations of dialectic.

According to Lonergan, the task of dialectic is to find abundant materials in the history of Christian movements, primarily the conflicts centring in Christian movements and the secondary conflicts in historical accounts and theological interpretations of the movements.⁴³ As Clifford explains, when the theologians engage in dialectic, they usually approach these materials with a set of presuppositions and will draw upon the operations of the preceding specialties of research, interpretation, and history within some horizon. Therefore, they need a common rereading of history to understand how each tradition has received and interpreted the Word of God. This allows them to receive

³⁸ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 360.

³⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 367.

⁴⁰ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 136.

⁴¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 130.

⁴² Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 247-248.

⁴³ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 129.

the insights of each tradition, to recognize the limitations of historical judgments, and to uncover the roots of division. Afterwards, they can clarify their contrary positions, knowing whether the judgments of the past were marked by authenticity or unauthenticity. In this way, some of the contrary positions may be illuminated through the integration of new data discovered through research and interpretation, whereas others may be appreciated as variations in perspective of the dialogue partner.⁴⁴

Besides, "the function of dialectic will be to bring such conflicts to light, and to provide a technique that objectifies subjective differences and promotes conversion."⁴⁵ This conversion toward a new horizon of common faith is needed because "the presence or absence of intellectual, of moral, of religious conversion gives rise to dialectically opposed horizons."⁴⁶ As dialogue presupposes some elements of commonality that serve as a basis for unity, the other unfamiliar elements perceived as antithetical represents a foreign horizon that can be incorporated into one's own horizon through the dialogue, hence to be understood. In this process of mutual understanding and conversion, the fusion of the horizons denotes the opening up of an unfamiliar world and one can take both horizons seriously.⁴⁷

44 Catherine E. Clifford, "Lonergan's contribution to ecumenism," *Theological Studies* 63, no. 3 (2002): 527.

45 Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 235.

46 Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 247.

47 Jeffrey Gros, F. S. C., Eamon McManus & Ann Riggs, *Introduction to Ecumenism* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1998), p. 116.

To cite an example, *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* affirms that Lutherans and Catholics "confess together that all persons depend completely on the saving grace of God for their salvation."⁴⁸ It then notes that Catholics speak of "cooperation" with divine grace;⁴⁹ whereas Lutherans hold that "human beings are incapable of cooperating in their salvation."⁵⁰ Apparently, one might easily conclude that these two articulations reflect contrary positions with irreconcilable differences. But the function of dialectic allows us to understand each position within the horizon of our common confession of the primacy of God's grace. Catholics see cooperation "as itself an effect of grace, not as an action arising from innate human abilities."⁵¹ As for Lutherans, when they emphasize the human person's passive reception of grace, "they mean thereby to exclude the possibility of contributing to one's own justification, but do not deny that believers are fully involved in their personal faith."⁵² Accordingly, both Lutheran and Catholic positions express the dependency of sinners on the saving grace of God, but approaching from different perspectives. If viewed from this new horizon of common faith, Lutherans and Catholics can come to an intelligent understanding that their positions on "justification" reflected "different sets of concerns"

48 *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* 19.

49 *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* 20.

50 *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* 21.

51 *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* 20.

52 *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* 21.

instead of being mutually exclusive.⁵³ Therefore, both churches can make a reasonable judgment that the condemnations of the Lutheran confessional statements and the condemnations of the Council of Trent concerning justification do not apply to today's dialogue partners.

In short, the functional specialty of dialectic enables Lutherans and Catholics to recognize the share of the common faith and new horizon of this common faith in one another's approach to the doctrine of justification. As Lonergan writes, "Encounter is the one way in which self-understanding and horizon can be put to the test."⁵⁴ By confronting the limitations of our horizon in our encounter with others' horizons, we can receive the Gospel in a new context of shared faith. Then after the recognition affirmed by differentiated consensus, the churches can make a responsible decision to receive the fruit of the ecumenical dialogues, making the new horizon of common faith operative in the mediated phase of theology.

e) Lonergan's Methodical Notion of "Foundations"

After the functional specialty of dialectic which ends the first phase of mediating theology in ecumenical dialogue, we proceed to the second phase of mediated theology starting from the functional specialty of

"foundations," which will "add a dimension of depth and seriousness to the analyses reached by dialectic. That depth and seriousness, in turn, will reinforce the ecumenical spirit of dialectic and, at the same time, weaken its merely polemical tendencies."⁵⁵

First of all, when Lonergan writes of the "conversion," he describes it as a movement to a new horizon that entails the set of judgments and decisions by which we move from one horizon to another. The parameters of this new horizon are articulated in the functional specialty of foundations where "conversion itself is made thematic and objectified."⁵⁶ In this way, foundations can be regarded as "a fully conscious decision about one's horizon, one's outlook, one's worldview. It deliberately selects the framework, in which doctrines have their meaning, in which systematics reconciles, in which communications are effective."⁵⁷

Though Lonergan recognizes that the horizon in foundations will possess doctrinal dimensions,⁵⁸ he distinguishes the function of doctrines which expresses judgments of fact and value, and the function of foundations which establishes "the horizon within which the meaning of doctrines can be apprehended."⁵⁹ As viewed from this perspective, differentiated consensus proposes only the elements of doctrine for reception into church doctrines and should not replace confessional

⁵³ H. George Anderson, T. Austin Murphy, Joseph A. Burgess, eds., *Justification by Faith: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue*, VII 57 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1985).

⁵⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 247.

⁵⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 144.

⁵⁶ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 131.

⁵⁷ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 268.

⁵⁸ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 142.

⁵⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 131.

formulations of faith. Instead, they should stand in continuity with the heritage of each tradition to establish a shared horizon of meaning within which confessional formulations of faith are interpreted and their authenticity is evaluated.⁶⁰

To cite one more example, the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* affirms “a consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification and shows that the remaining differences of explication are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnations.”⁶¹ The document then sets out seven points of common understanding that have been agreed, in the light of which different Lutheran and Catholic confessional formulations of faith are interpreted. Accordingly, the persistence of these remaining differences does not diminish the achievement of consensus, for the articulation of a fundamental agreement identified on a doctrine in dispute just represents a shared horizon of meaning. In this way, the methodical notion of foundations enables us to clarify the role of differentiated consensus and its reception into the life of the Church.

Conclusion

To conclude, the churches of different confessions today are still not well equipped for achieving differentiated consensus in the ecumenical dialogues as well as church renewal. Lonergan's method in theology, as we have examined, may be illuminative to ecumenical

encounters by offering insights to foster both ecclesial recognition of differentiated consensus and reception of its fruit in the life of each church. Therefore, I suggest making an improvement in this ecumenical methodology with Lonergan's method in theology as its theoretical framework. In this way, the churches of different confessions can not only understand intelligently the limitations of historical judgments, but also make reasonable judgments and responsible decisions for Christian church unity, based on an intelligent understanding of our common faith.

⁶⁰ Catherine E. Clifford, “Lonergan's contribution to ecumenism,” pp. 531-532.

⁶¹ *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* 5.